

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the

Incorporated SOCIETY

FOR THE

*Propagation of the Gospel in
Foreign Parts;*

AT THEIR

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

IN THE

Parish-Church of St. Mary-le-Bow;

On Friday the 16th of February, 1721.

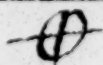
By the Right Reverend Father in GOD, ^K

^{Böller}
HUG H^A Lord Bishop of BRISTOL.

Arch. Bp

L O N D O N,

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February 16. 1721.

*At the Anniversary Meeting of the Society
for the Propagation of the Gospel
in Foreign Parts.*

A Greed, That the Thanks of the Society be given to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of *Bristol*, for his Sermon preach'd this Day before the Society; And that he be desired to print the same.



David Humphreys, Secretary.



LUKE XXIV. 47.

*And that Repentance and Remission
of Sins should be preached in his
Name, among all Nations, Be-
ginning at Ferusalem.*



WE find in this Chapter that the Disciples of our Blessed Saviour, who, upon hearing the heavenly Doctrine he taught, and seeing the many Miracles he did, esteem'd him a Prophet mighty in Word and Deed, and trusted that he had been the *Messias*, who should have redeem'd *Israel*, had lost their Hopes and Expectation upon his being condemn'd and crucify'd.

In Order therefore to revive their Faith and Confidence in him, that were well nigh extinct, after his Resurrection he appear'd first to *Mary*, and the other Women that came to his Sepulchre, then to *Peter*, afterwards to two of the Disciples going to *Emmaus*, and at last, on the same Day, to the Apostles and other Disciples, that were met together, and comparing the Evidences they had of his being risen from the Dead. And when upon his standing in the Midst of them, they were frighten'd, and took him for a Spirit, he desir'd them to feel of him, and then eat before them, that their Senses might assure them he was no Apparition, but truly the Person they took him for.

And throughly to remove all their Fears and Doubts, he puts them in Mind, that in his Sufferings, which had so much scandaliz'd them, and in his Resurrection, which they still scarce knew how to believe, nothing had happen'd but what, he had told them whilst alive with them, was prophesied

sied of him, and must necessarily be accomplish'd in him; and for their farther Conviction, whilst at the same Time by his heavenly Grace he open'd their Understandings, he shew'd them, from particular Passages in the Old Testament, that *it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the Dead the third Day;* and that as the happy Consequence of all this, Pardon of Sins through him should be publish'd to Mankind upon their Repentance, in the Words of the Text, *And that Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preached in his Name, among all Nations, Beginning at Jerusalem.*

From which Words I shall observe,

- I. The great Want all Nations were in of having Repentance and Remission of Sins preach'd to them.
- II. What is meant by Repentance and Remission of Sins being preach'd in the Name of Christ.
- III. The great Advantage of having Repentance and Remission of Sins,
thus

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thus preach'd to them in the Name of Christ.

And 1. Of the great Want all Nations were in of having Repentance and Remission of Sins preach'd to them.

The Case of the *Jews* I shall not at all consider in this Discourse, what Advantages they had, which were very great beyond the Heathen, nor what they still wanted; but wholly confine my self to the *Gentile* World, who in the Scripture are generally meant by the Nations.

Now that they stood in Need of Remission of Sins, their Conscience instructed them, upon the Commission of some heinous Offences against the Light of Nature, and by its dreadful Accusations and Reproaches, set them on Variety of Ways to obtain it, by Diversity of Sacrifices, by Purifications, and by sundry Kinds of superstitious Observances, without their being able after all to arrive at any rational Assurance of Pardon, and Ease in their Minds. But what-

whatever they thought of themselves, we, who are thoroughly instructed in that Law God has given all Mankind as the Rule of their Actions, know that they had most grossly broken that Law, and stood in Need of Pardon at the Hands of God for their Transgressions. If we take a View of that black Catalogue of Sins, with which their wise Men stand charg'd by the Apostle, *Rom. I.* or the Accounts other Writers give of the Corruption of Manners amongst them about that Time, we shall find they had Occasion for great Mercy to be forgiven of God. And if we consider the State of the Heathens in all Ages, we shall find they have allow'd themselves in the Practice of several Vices, without any Sense of Guilt contracted by them; besides what Sins they committed in Defiance of the Directions of their own Conscience. And if omitting the Consideration of their Duty to themselves and their Neighbour, we take a View of their Behaviour in Relation to God, there we shall find

find them universally and grossly deficient, most generally being ignorant of the One Supreme God, and insensible that they are the Work of his Hands, and owe all they are or have to his Goodness; worshipping in his stead a Multitude of fictitious Deities, serving the Creature before the Creator, falling down to Stocks and Stones, and adoring Birds, and fourfooted Beasts, and creeping Things; and in the barbarous Parts of the World, frequently paying Worship to the Devil himself, the Author and Inflicter of Evil, as they esteem him; and placing the Divine Service sometimes in lewd Practices, sometimes in cruel and bloody Performances, and always mixing it with ridiculous and superstitious Observances. So that had they been never so innocent in the other Parts of their Duty, yet were they highly criminal in what immediately related to God, and extremely wanted the Remission of their Sins.

That in Order to obtain this, Repentance was necessary, the wisest amongst

mongst them were convinc'd, and not such a Repentance as barely consisted in a Sorrow for their Offences, and begging Pardon for them; but such as carry'd with it the forsaking their former evil Ways, and changing their Lives for the better. But then, as they had but an imperfect Knowledge of their Duty, they cou'd have but a partial Notion of what was to be done in repenting; they cou'd be set only on reforming some more palpable Vices; and as to the Sins against the first Table, thro' the false Notions they had of Religion, the more Serious and Earnest they were in repenting, the more superstitious and idolatrous was their Conduct for the future, and the more heinously did they provoke the true God.

So that they very much wanted to be taught that their Sins might certainly be forgiven, and by what Repentance such Forgiveness might be obtain'd.

But tho' God had by our Lord Christ made to the *Jews* a more clear Revelation of the sure Method of procuring the Par-
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don of Sin to all that would pursue that Method; yet without his sending out some to acquaint the several Nations of the World with those glad Tidings of Peace and Salvation, and proving to them the Truth of their Doctrine, few of the Heathen had been the better for such farther Revelation of God's Will, any more than they had been for the Law of *Moses* given that People; without some extraordinary and powerful Mission to the World, the greatest Part of Mankind would have never heard of any such Manifestation of God's Will, and fewer still would have at all attended to it, or have believ'd it. And to convince us of this, it may not be improper under this Head briefly to enquire a little into the Impediments there were among the Heathen, to their either examining into, or embracing this fuller Revelation made in the Gospel.

And tho' many might be assign'd, and those weighty ones, yet to keep this Discourse within proper Bounds, I shall

shall content my self with the mention of two.

1. One Hindrance in their Way, was the Insensibility they were in of their present Danger.

As they were ignorant of the true Nature of God, and the Service due to him, and were perswaded of the Truth of the false Worship they were engaged in, they cou'd not be any Ways sensible how provoking their Idolatry was to God. As they had very imperfect Notions of the other Parts of their Duty, they likewise were proportionably deficient in the Sense of the Guilt they were still contracting. And as they were very doubtful whether any Harm wou'd happen to them after this Life ended, even for what Evil they were perswaded they had committed here; it is evident they cou'd have no very dreadful Apprehensions of the Danger they were in: Since as to part of their Danger they were wholly blind, and but ill Judges of the Degree of what they did apprehend. But now it

is the Sense of the Danger they are in from their Sins that makes Men look about them in good Earnest, to examine which is the certain Way to escape the Destruction ready to overtake them, and to resolve to go in that Way. But this we see was not the Case of the Heathens.

The 2^d Hindrance I shall mention in their Way, was their Prejudice in Favour of their old Religion.

It is certain, Mankind generally go on with great Satisfaction of Mind in believing what is generally profest, and it is by some great Chance that they entertain any Doubt about its Truth, or enquire after any Thing better. And if their not complying with the Rules of the Religion they embrace gives them no Disturbance, they seldom suspect there is any Occasion for examining the Truth or Solidity of those Rules. And accordingly we find the Heathen World going on with an entire Acquiescence in a Course of absurd Notions, and wicked

wicked or ridiculous Observances, no Ways suspecting any Falshood in what they believed, or Impiety in what they practis'd. And consequently if the Gospel had not been brought to their Doors, there was no Disposition in them to enquire after that, or any other new Doctrine of a different Kind from their own Religion. But we may farther observe, that the Attachment Persons have to the Religion in which they have been educated, or that they have long profess'd, is such, that the least Scruples about its Truth are, when they first rise in their Minds, lookt on with Horrour, and esteem'd as Approaches to Blasphemy. What then must be the Thoughts of a *Gentile* upon first hearing there was a Religion, that taught that the Gods he had been hitherto worshipping were no Gods, and that his Service of them was the highest Injury and Affront to the true Deity? That he was to loath and detest what had been held in the highest Veneration by his Ancestors, and to think and act

act the reverse of what they had counted good and holy for many Generations? It must be somewhat very moving and powerful that cou'd at all engage him to learn what a Religion so opposite to his taught, and to consider the Strength of the Arguments brought to support it.

In Order therefore to remove these and what other Hindrances might lie in the Way of Men's either knowing any Thing of the Revelation made to Mankind by his Son, or embracing it when known, it pleased God by him to Commission the Apostles to go and preach the Gospel to all Nations; and that they and their first Successors might command the Attention of their Hearers, and convince them that what they taught was certainly from God, he likewise confirm'd their Preaching by working by their Hands many Signs and Wonders, and bestow'd on their Converts diverse Gifts of the Holy Ghost. And as he design'd to let all Nations alike have the Benefit of this last Dispensation, and
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graciously to admit them to Remission of their Sins upon their Repentance, so did he send out his Ambassadors amongst them to publish to them the Terms on which he wou'd be reconcil'd to Sinners, and to press them to lay aside their Enmity to God; and gave them the Credentials of Miracles to make their Embassy of some Weight. And thus he provided both for the Want they were in of Pardon for their many and great Sins, and the farther Need they stood in of being instructed in and assured of the Certainty of that Method in which the Remission of their Sins was offer'd to them.

I come now to the II^d general Head, to enquire what is here meant by Repentance and Remission of Sins being preach'd in the Name of Christ.

And 1. The preaching Repentance and Remission of Sins in the Name of Christ, implies the publishing these glad Tidings to the World by his Commission and Authority.

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And this is what we are led to by considering *Matt. xxviii.* where our Saviour enjoyns his Disciples to go and teach all Nations; but then he gives them this Injunction, in Virtue and Consequence of his being vested with all Power and Authority himself, and thereby enabled to give them such an extensive Commission, as *Ver. 18, 19.* *Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All Power is given unto me in Heaven and in Earth. Go ye therefore and teach all Nations.* And in like Manner, *John xx. 21.* we find our Saviour, for the Encouragement of his Disciples, assuring them, that as he had been commission'd by his Father for the Work he had then perform'd on Earth, so were they by him commission'd for the Undertaking they were then engaging in: *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.* So that when they proclaimed Pardon of Sins to all upon their Repentance, they declared this was no Invention or Enterprize of their own, but that they had

had Authority from Christ to make this gracious Offer from God to Mankind.

But then as their acting by the Authority of Christ was no Proof to their Hearers that what they preach'd of the merciful Intentions of God towards a sinful World was true, except they cou'd likewise satisfie them that Christ himself had a Power from God to promise Pardon to Mankind upon complying with the Terms propos'd in the Gospel; they in their Preaching assur'd the World that what they taught they had learnt from the blessed Jesus, who had profess'd himself a Prophet sent from God, the *Messias* promised to the *Jews*, and had in his Life-time wrought many undoubted Miracles in Confirmation of his Doctrine, and to whose Mission God had given the utmost Confirmation, by raising him from the Dead on the third Day. And that of the Truth of his Resurrection they and many hundred others were Witnesses, having several Times seen and convers'd with him after

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his rising from the Grave, before he was miraculously taken up from them into Heaven.

And to corroborate this their Testimony, where their Knowledge of these Facts and their Probity were not sufficiently known, they were endowed with Power from God to work Variety of Miracles in the Sight of their Hearers, and had the Gift of Tongues to preach among Nations, whose Languages they never had learnt. And we find in their Sermons recorded in the Scriptures, that they still declar'd that it was Christ who had bestow'd on them these Powers, in Order to their bearing Witness to his Resurrection, and thereby attesting to the Truth of the Message he sent them to deliver to Mankind. And this was one Way in which Repentance and Remission of Sins was preach'd to the World in the Name of Christ.

2. This was done, as the Apostles taught, that these Benefits were procur'd by his Death.

What

What the Apostles taught was, that our blessed Saviour died for our Sins; that he paid his Life a Ransom for the World; that by his Blood he reconcil'd us to the Father; that he was offer'd for our Sins; and that he appeared once in the End of the World to put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself. And hence Faith in him is made Part of the Terms of our Salvation. Thus St. John tells us, Chap. iii. 16. So God loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shou'd not perish, but have everlasting Life. And St. Mark informs us, Chap. xvi. 16. That he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned. And St. Peter instructs Cornelius, Acts ix. 43. That through his Name whosoever believeth in him shall receive Remission of Sins. And agreeably to this we find St. Paul preaching, Acts xiii. 38, 39. that through this Man is preacht unto you the Forgiveness of Sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all Things from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses.

We find then by the Practice of the Apostles, who best understood what was prophesy'd of our Saviour, or commanded by him in Relation to the *Gentiles*, that the preaching Remission of Sins thro' his Name to them, implied that the Pardon of their Sins was obtain'd of God by his Death; and that in Order to partake of that Pardon, not only Repentance, but likewise Faith in him, that thro' him, and for his Sake, they were to receive Remission of their Sins, was absolutely necessary.

3. This is likewise done in his Name, as the Gospel teaches us, that it is by his other mediatorial Acts that we get into, or continue in, such a State as to have our Sins remitted.

It is certain, that if our blessed Saviour had not made to us a perfect Discovery of our Duty, we should be at a Loss what we were to beg Pardon of God for as to what is past, and in what Particulars we are to amend our Lives for the Future; and without this two-fold

fold Knowledge, how can our Repentance be any Ways acceptable to God?

But besides, the Faith and Repentance that are requisite to the Remission of our Sins, are themselves the Gift of God, for the Sake of Christ, and wrought in us by his Holy Spirit, which is Part of the Purchase of his Bloud. It is the Grace of God that first touches our Hearts with a lively Sense of our Guilt, so as to work in us a godly Sorrow, and to set us on resolving to forsake our evil Courses; and that makes us feel the Want we have of a Saviour, and helps us to embrace him with true Faith. It is the same Grace that enables us to perform our good Resolutions, and persevere in the Ways of Holiness when we are once entered; without which we should soon lose the Benefit of our former Pardon.

And we owe it to the powerful Intercession of the Blessed Jesus at the right Hand of God, that our Prayers are at any Time heard, and our imperfect Obedience accepted of by God.

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And surely, if it is by the Grace he has procur'd for us that we at all repent and believe, so as to be qualify'd for Pardon; if it is by his Grace that we continue in a State of Favour with God; and if it is thro' his powerful Intercession joyn'd with them, that our Prayers obtain this Grace of God, then is it in his Name that Repentance and Remission of Sins is preach'd in the Christian Religion.

I come now in the *III^d* Place to consider the great Advantage it was to all Nations to have Repentance and Remission of Sins thus preach'd to them in the Name of Christ.

And the *1st* I shall mention is, that it had a direct Tendency to remove their Jealousy of the Anger of God against them. A *Gentile* upon his being first brought to a Sense of the abominable Idolatry and vicious Course he had liv'd in, without any Knowledge of God, or Regard to him and his Laws, and that all his Nation for many Generations had gone on in such an open Rebellion against God, might justly suspect whether there was Room left for such obstinate

stinate Sinners to obtain Pardon of God, and be received into his Favour; and still the more when he began now to reflect, that God had not at any Time left himself without Witness, but that they might by the Light of Nature have traced out the Being of a God, and a Providence, and more of his Laws than they had hitherto regarded, and might at least have formed some Conjectures about a future State of Rewards and Punishments for what Men had done in the Body. It is certain the *Jews* thought the Idolatry and Wickedness of the *Heathen* to be so highly provoking to God, that one of their Prejudices against the Gospel was, that the Apostles preach'd Forgiveness of Sins to the *Gentile* as well as to the *Jew* upon their Repentance.

But whatever Apprehensions the *Heathen* could have that their Sins deserv'd, that they should utterly be rejected by God, yet their Minds cou'd not but be made easy as to any such jealousy, when they saw God thus contriving a Method for their Salvation, raising them up a
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Saviour to appease his Anger, and reconcile him to them, and without their seeking sending out Preachers to offer Terms of Pardon to them, and to invite them to be reconcil'd to God.

2. In this Way they cou'd arrive at a Certainty what they were to do in the Matter of Religion.

The great Wickedness of the *Heathen* was in Part owing to the great Doubts they were under about the Nature of God and his Service, about what Obligation lay on Men as to Morality, and what they wereto expect for neglecting or performing what they apprehended to be their Duty. And we find the several Reasonings and Disputes of their Philosophers rather serv'd to perplex than to clear up these weighty Points; and the ordinary People at least were unable any Ways to judge of the Strength of the Arguments brought on all Sides, to know what was true in the great Variety of Opinions advanc'd by the Learned. But in the Way God was pleas'd to communicate the Gospel to them, they

they could easily arrive at a Certainty in these Doctrines. They were competent Judges whether such a Miracle was really perform'd before their own Eyes, or the Eyes of their Neighbours or Acquaintance; and if they were satisfied that such a Miracle was really wrought, they could not doubt of the Resurrection of our Blessed Saviour, to prove which, the Apostles wrought their Miracles; and if Christ was risen from the Dead, then was the Doctrine he taught most certainly true; and they wanted no farther Enquiry than to know what he had taught in Matters of Religion; and thus without any long and intricate Reasoning, they could come to a Certainty what that God was whom they were to serve, what were the Commands he had laid on them, and what were the Motives he had given them, to engage them to perform their Duty. And being thus provided, they were able to cut off all Pretences and Subterfuges from their corrupt Inclinations, which before shelter'd them-

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selves under the great Doubts they labour'd under. And as the Apostles chiefly stirr'd them up to Repentance, from our Saviour's being appointed to judge the World, and to raise his faithful Servants from the Grave, and instate them in eternal Bliss, the Proof of his Doctrine from his own Resurrection had a particular Tendency to inforce these Motives, since in him they saw an Instance of a Man like themselves, Sin only excepted, who, for his perfect Obedience and Submission to the Will of his Father, was not only rais'd to a happy Immortality, but highly exalted, and vested with all Power both in Heaven and Earth, and thereby enabled to protect his Followers here, and make them hereafter sit down with him in Heaven, and there with him for ever partake of the Joys and Glory of the Father.

3. And lastly, In this Way of calling all Nations to Repentance, there were several powerful Motives to Holiness suggested, which in the Way of
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the Law of Nature must have been wanting, tho' Mankind had retained never so perfect a Knowledge of that Law.

But these I can only just mention, having already trespass'd so long upon your Patience.

Such are the amazing Goodness of God to Mankind, beyond any Thing shewn in the Works of his Creation and Providence, in laying out the Scheme of our Redemption, so as to give his only begotten Son to die for our Sakes, and to make him the great Author and Finisher of our Salvation: The infinite Love of the Son of God to lost Mankind, that brought him down from Heaven to take our Nature upon him, and in it to lead a poor and miserable Life, and at last to submit to the ignominious Death of the Cross, to make an Atonement for our Sins, and reveal to us the Terms on which we might regain the Favour of God. And surely these Considerations should fill our Hearts with the highest Sense of Love

and Gratitude to our God and to our Saviour, and make us careful to the last Degree how by our Sins we defeat their gracious Purposes towards us. Another Encouragement to set with Cheerfulness about our Duty, beyond any Thing to be met with either in the Law of Nature or that of *Moses*, is the Promise of God's Holy Spirit given us in the Gospel, to assist us to perform the Duty required of us.

The last I shall mention, is the infinite and eternal Happiness of Heaven, promis'd to all true Believers persevering in Holiness to their Lives End, beyond whatever our Services can deserve, or what any one instructed only by the Light of Nature could either hope or wish for.

And certainly being sure of such an Assistant, and such a Reward, nothing will be able to deter us from resolutely Complying with the Terms of Salvation propos'd in the Gospel.

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I should now come to make Inferences from what has been said. Such as the stirring us up, by true Repentance, to lay hold on this Remission of Sins preach'd to all Nations in the Name of Christ; and the exciting us all to the utmost Thankfulness to God, for enlightning this dark Corner of the Earth with the Knowledge of the Gospel, and vouchsafing to our Ancestors, as barbarous at that Time as any other People, in the early Ages of Christianity, the great Favour of Planting his holy Religion amongst them; and after it had been long obscur'd by *Romish* Errors and Superstitions, restoring it to its former Purity amongst us.

But I shall pass these by, and hasten to the Occasion of our present Meeting.

We have seen the gracious Intentions of God revealed to his Prophets long before the sending our Saviour into the World, that in his Name Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preach'd to all Nations; we have
seen

seen likewise the great Need all stood in of Pardon of Sins, and of being instructed wherein true Repentance consisted; and that they who were the deepest plunged in Ignorance, Vice and Idolatry, most wanted the kind Interposition of Providence, to send Teachers amongst them, who might conduct them to the Knowledge of the true God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; a Knowledge which they could neither seek nor wish for, because they were not sensible that they wanted it. This Intention of God, foretold by the Prophets, and confirm'd by our Saviour, has been in Part fulfill'd among us of this Nation, by our *having our Eyes opened*, and our being *turned from Darkness to Light*, and *from the Power of Satan unto God*, that we might receive *Forgiveness of Sins*, and an *Inheritance among them that are sanctified by Faith in Christ*.

And when we have been admitted to these great Benefits our selves, we cannot but think our selves obliged, as
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we have Opportunity, to promote the entire Completion of these Predictions, and to labour that all the Kingdoms of the World may be brought into the Kingdom of our Lord. But still among the vast Tracts of the Earth that continue cover'd with heathenish Ignorance and Superstition, some Regions may claim our more immediate Regard, or may give us a more encouraging Prospect of being able to convert them to the Faith. And such certainly are the *Heathen* mix'd in our Colonies in *America*, or dwelling in their Neighbourhood. As we receive great temporal Advantages from the Labours of the first, and from Traffick with the latter, and as they are both under our Government or Protection, we cannot but think we ought to make them Partakers of our spiritual Blessings.

Nor are those of our own People, who are settled there, to be left out of our Regard, since in many Places
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there, they had been for many Years, and in some Places more than one Generation, without any ghostly Teachers, so as to have retain'd little more than the Name of Christians, till by the Care and Assistance of this Society, the Knowledge of the Gospel has begun to be revived amongst them. It was with a particular View to relieve the spiritual Wants of those Countries, that some well disposed Persons first got themselves incorporated, that they might the better, with united Counsels and Contributions, carry on so noble and Evangelical an Undertaking. What Increase they have since had of Members, what Assistance others have given to their good Design, and with what good Success those Liberalities have been imployed, I shall refer to the yearly Accounts of the Proceedings of this truly Christian Society.

Nor shall I attempt to give my Thoughts how this Work may best be

be carried on in its several Branches, as having been the Subject of abler Pens, and as imploying the Thoughts of those who have been longer, and are better acquainted with the Circumstances of those Countries.

But I shall only observe, by Way of Conclusion, that the Society are yet only in the Beginnings of the great Work they would willingly push on, for Want of sufficient Funds to support the Design; and that therefore it is to be hop'd that every one, who is toucht with a Concern for the Salvation of those miserable Ignorants, who have immortal Souls as well as our selves; and who is mov'd with a Zeal for the Glory of God, that the whole Earth may serve and worship their great Creator; and who desires to advance the Honour of our Blessed Saviour, that the Fulness of the *Gentiles* may come into his Kingdom, will assist with their Encouragement and Liberality to send out a greater

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Number of Labourers, where the Harvest is certainly so great.

To which God of his infinite Mercy incline all our Hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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